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When God created the world, He also created humanity in His image. In the verdant Garden of Eden, God first created humanity. There are two different versions of the creation of humanity, particularly Eve. “Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis, 14-15).

In the second creation account, God creates Adam first, from the dust of the ground and God breathes His breath into him. In time, God decides that it is not good for man to be alone. Unable to find a suitable mate among God’s creatures, God puts Adam into a deep sleep. He then removes one of Adam’s ribs, using it to create Eve (Genesis, 18). In this second version, there is a tree at the center of the Garden of Eden that possesses the knowledge of good and evil. It is forbidden to eat of this tree, at the cost of human life. Eve disobeys this rule at the persuasion of the serpent, creating the first “sin” among humanity. This marks humanity for all time with the weight of sin. But humanity can find its way back to God through salvation.

Soteriology is the study of salvation, *soteria* meaning “salvation.” This “attends to the interconnections between who Jesus is and what he has done, especially in the cross and the resurrection, to bring about salvation” (Jones, 141). Salvation is God’s work which exists in the past, present, and future (Jones, 143). It is not something that exists at a distance, but is a blessing in the present, which through God’s free mercy, all humanity possesses. This salvation is extended through the entirety of God’s work from the first dawning of His grace in the soul

until it is consummated in His glory. The way to salvation consists of four steps. Beginnings, justification, sanctification, and final redemption.

Salvation is a universal invitation for everyone that starts with the divine initiative. This is the recognition that we are a sinner and we have a problem. We are in need of salvation and this recognition is a work of grace. “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6: 23). In this step we participate in contrition where we “step on the way of salvation when we feel sorry for our sin, when we wish it could be made right” (Jones, 145) and then work our way to repentance. This is defined as turning “away from sin and toward God (Jones, 145).

The next step is justification, originating from the Greek *dikaiosis, dik* meaning “what is right.” This is defined as God forgiving our sins and making us right. “Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God” (Rom 5: 1-2). Just as one human’s trespass led to the condemnation of all of humanity, one person’s act of righteousness shall lead to justification and life for all.

Sanctification refers to God’s forgiveness and rebirthing us into our new lives. “[N]ow that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification” (Rom. 6: 22). Finally, this leads to the final redemption. This is the fulfillment of God’s work, passing humanity into everlasting life. This does not only mean that we will enter Heaven when we die, but also that we will be brought to creation’s fullness, completeness, and perfection.

This leads us to the many models of Atonement. The first being, deification. This emphasizes the connection between Incarnation and humanity, the Incarnation referring to Christ’s human form. “[Christ], indeed, assumed humanity, that we might become God” (Jones,

159). The strength of this model is that it takes cosmic nature of salvation seriously; deals with biblical witness that we are really transformed; based on Jesus' humanity and divinity. It's weakness is that it violates the distinction between Creator and creature.

Another model is that of Christus Victor, emphasizing Christ's cosmic victory over sin and death. It sees work of Christ as extending far beyond the individual into the whole of the world. It has a strength of taking death seriously and not just sin alone as the enemy of God, so takes resurrection seriously. But it falters in the fact that it may give the role of Satan too much power (battle imagery). The cross centered models of Atonement are Satisfaction and substitutionary atonement, strong in that they are based in the person of Jesus Christ, human and divine, takes seriously the biblical witness about justification, deals seriously with the horror of sin; it has consequences, emphasizing the justice and faithfulness of God, and it deals with the central place that Christ's sacrifice on the cross takes in the Bible. Its weaknesses are in that they give less attention to incarnation, life and resurrection of Christ. They also tend to a soteriology focused on individuals (at expense of cosmos) and focus on justification at the expense of sanctification.

I would personally argue that in context of the original creation story, paired with the second, that Eve did not commit a sin at all. She was originally made separate from Adam, her own being. In this, she has her own power and influence. This first story lacked the tree, making humanity strictly as God is, knowing all the same as He. By eating the apple in the second story, she returns to her original state intended by God. She is like God. Seeing as the serpent is retroactively seen as Satan, the Adversary and God's right-hand man and servant, I would argue that would state that the Tree was not truly forbidden. But, it was a test similar to that of Job to

return humanity to that of its original state. Our expulsion was not a punishment but an allowance to live on Earth as the Gods that we are.

Therefore, there si no neeed for salvation.